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KOJIN KARATANI AND THE HISTOROTRASCENDENTAL LOGIC OF CAPITAL

ECONOFICTION CAPITAL, KARATANI, MARX, MARXISM, VALUE

If one wants to follow the Japanese philosopher Kojin Karatani, Marx has posed the problem of the value form and value in the course of the theoretical treatment of the antinomy of intrinsic value and value relativism. (Cf. Karatani 2003) For Marx, this problem presented itself as follows with regard to the various currents of bourgeois political economy in the 19th century: On the one hand, there was Ricardo's political economy, which is based purely on an intrinsic labor value theory and whose legacy is generally considered to be Marx. On the other hand, Marx was confronted at an early stage with the positions of Samuel Bailey, who in 1825 sharply criticized Ricardo for mistakenly understanding work or working time as a substance of value and thus making it an intrinsic property of things. (MEGA II/34: 1319). Bailey argued that value was an exclusively relational phenomenon, today we would say that value exists only as a so-called marker that indicates how goods are related to each other and convertible (into money) in order to finally be exchanged. While for Ricardo the value simply measures the work that is objectified in the goods, for Bailey the value has a purely relational implication, with Bailey paying little attention to money as the medium/form in which these relations are represented – i.e., Bailey simply forgets the simple fact that goods have never been exchanged on a larger scale directly against each other, for instance in the context of a simple production of goods that many Marxists still conceive as a real-historical stage following Engels. In the case of Bailey, the fact that the system of value relations could be considerably affected by the change of a single item is now aggravating – provided one grasps the value exclusively as the relation of the goods to one another. And it looks as if Bailey would have to reintroduce money as a zero sign or as an absent center for purely tactical reasons to support his synchronous system, in order to be able to display or fake something like stability in the economy. (Cf. Karatani 2003: 213f.) On the other hand, in Ricardo's classical labor value theory, the concept of value functions as a completely different kind of theoretical rationalization in economics, with Ricardo conceiving human labor as the substance common to all commodities, through which the rational distribution into the various sectors of production is then controlled as a principle.

In Karatani's view, Marx has now elaborated his own concept of the value form as a kind of transcritic located between the poles of Bailey and Ricardo. (ibid.) Karatani thus argues that Marx implicitly introduces his "critique of political economy" to a parallax view, namely of the antinomy between Bailey's subjective relationist value theory and Ricardo's objective labor value theory.

Karatani Marxens does not see the solution of Kant's antinomy problem in the reduction of one theory to the other or in a dialectical synthesis of the two theories, but rather, as Marx has just done, in understanding the antinomy itself as irreducible, as an irreducible gap between the two theoretical positions, the structural gap between them. (Cf. Žižek 2006: 24) (Parallax is equal to the angle between two straight lines that are directed from the shifting positions of a subject to the same point – an object against a background. The subject and object remain related to each other in such a way that a shift in the epistemological view of the subject involves an ontological alteration of the object, which in a way returns a gaze that transcends the subject – the eye has always been the canvas and not the camera.)

In contrast to the concept of transcendence, the Kantian concept of transcendenceality contains a moment of inner-worldliness, inasmuch as the transcendental is presupposed as a principle of things and relationships in the world, a principle "by which experience is necessarily subjected a priori to our ideas". (Deleuze 2008: 40–41) The transcendental condition (which refers neither to Noumena nor to things per se) is, as we have seen in the discussion with Laruelle, to be understood in the Kantian sense as universal and contains, independently of experience, an a priori of ideas with the criteria of generality and necessity, but always also refers to experience. Nevertheless, the transcendental must not be understood as empirically grounded, since it does not exist in experience, while on the other hand, in a certain sense, it is nothing but empirically grounded.

Thus the transcendental initially resembles a borderline concept. In the break with the Kantian a priori, which refers to ideas that do not spring from experience (although they cannot do without it), a non-metaphysical, historical a priori could be conceived, which is presupposed to the actions and thinking as an inescapable form, which in turn remains related to the quasi-transcendenceality of capital. Kant believed that what he called "transcendental apperception" (of the subject) would completely collapse if it were actually atomized as Hume, for example, assumed. Kant rejected on the one hand rationalism as metaphysics, the Cartesian cogito as an entity of res cogitans identical with itself, on the other hand he tried to show that Hume's variety of fleeting sensory data has always been the product of mediation, and this in the form of an intelligible sensibility, the power of imagination, which is more reflexive and abstract than any mere addition of sensations. In a certain way Kant invented the power of imagination as the supporting symbolic form, as the in-between of sensuality and understanding, he "overcame" the antinomy of empiricism and rationalism, which in his opinion had been the blind spot of all philosophers until then, without deciding for one of the two possibilities himself or synthesizing it purely imaginarily, as one could well assume if one were prepared to take two steps with Kant: On the one hand to understand transcendental aesthetics as the introduction of "pure contemplation", while on the other hand to understand transcendental analytics with its mechanism of schematism, which occupies an intermediate position between contemplation and concept, as the completion of synthesis, with which the power of imagination actually succeeds in bringing contemplation and understanding together on the basis of pure contemplation, namely as the sensualization of transcendence and the desensualization of contemplation. However, Adorno had already noticed that the so-called pure views are nothing but concepts, which points to the fact that the material on which the categorial work is active is already preformed, with which it is more appropriate to speak of "forms of viewing". Moreover, the (transcendental) subject can be problematized if the subject of transcendental apperception, on the one hand, is thought self-reflexive, but, on the other hand, by no means can be reduced to the schematism of empirical multiplicity, with the result that the subject would only emerge in the gap or in the rift or in the parallax between Phaenomenon and Noumenon, as the cleavage of the ego in time. (Cf. Žižek 2006: 26f.) The determinability of the "I am" through the "I think" is regulated in time. Thus the indefinite existence of the "I am", which is implied by the Cogito, can only be determined as the existence of a passive I, i.e. through time with its current, but above all virtual memories. (Cf. Deleuze 1992a: 119f.) The ego of the Cogito concretizes itself in risky simultaneity, which, however, cannot be had without temporal shifts; the ego is a flake that is transported in time in the process of differentiation.

For Karatani, an analogy to Marx arises at this point with regard to Kant's critique of Hume, in that Marx sees that the capitalist order would actually break apart if the value relations were so atomized or relative as Bailey, for example, assumed, and as the neoclassical marginalists postulate to this day in a certain way. According to Karatani, Marx makes use of a Kantian-inspired, transcendental argument when it brings value form analysis into play against both Bailey's nominalist-inspired rejection of the category of value and Ricardo's essentialist labor value theory. Karatani further argues that value and added value, as presented in Vol. 1 of Capital, indicate the transcendental conditions of the possibility of capitalism, with which we never empirically encounter value and added value, empirically we always encounter only prices and profits. (Karatani 2003: 241f.) Analogous to Kant's first critique, in which he exposes the transcendental conditions of the possibility of every experience, describe Marx in Vol.1 of capital, says Karatani, while Marx, analogous to Kant's third critique of singular experiences (the question of how to get from singular multiplicities to the transcendental conditions that generate and presuppose them at the same time), examines the (empirical) correlations between the individual capitals in Volume 3, but at this point also asks about the transcendental conditions, the actualization of which would lead to the realization of profits for

single capitals through the movement of the competition. And just as Kant's third critique introduces an antinomy between a) the universal nature of aesthetic judgment (which must be universally accepted), and b) the unfounded singularity of each individual judgment, so, according to Karatani Marx in Capital Vol. 3, the antinomy between a) the foundation of prices in value and profit in added value (Thesis: Ricardo), and b) the relative independence of prices from value and profit from added value (Antithesis: Bailey) accentuates. (ibid.: 133f.) While Bailey thus determines the price independently of the value and thus internally and purely relationally, namely as a result of the play of supply and demand, Ricardo considers the input of working time in his labour value theory to be the factor that solely determines the value.

Oetzel took another path in the Kant-Marx debate during the theoretical aftermath of the student movement with his book *Value Abstraction and Experience*, when he attempted to problematize the constellation of empirical quantities of goods on the one hand and the transcendental nature of money on the other by resorting to Kant's chapter on Schematism in order to arrive at the following conclusion: "That is, in the schema, the subsumption of the view under the intellect is carried out beforehand, so that it has generally become possible by means of the schema. Not otherwise with money: the utility value can be subsumed under the value by means of money, because in money it is exclusively subsumed under it. In the scheme we look at all objects of experience purely, just as in money we look at all social products purely. Just as money embodies the tangible horizon of the commodity world, so the scheme represents the 'audible' (Heidegger) horizon of the world of experience." (Oetzel 1979: 150) And Oetzel further concludes that the value of money extends its ontological basis to the extent that capital finally subsumes its material-technical side in real terms, so that at the moment when scientific-technical dispositives begin to dominate the production processes, the "static value form of money" translates into the "dynamic, technical value form of the machine" and thus the transcendental only becomes general. (ibid.) Oetzel is quite right in saying that the attempt at a naive separation of work process and exploitation process, without considering that capitalist technology *sui generis* represents the natural form of capital, rests on the imagination that one could once again project into the capitalist development of productive forces a humanity with which the objectification of the ontological metabolism between man and nature will find a worthy conclusion in and history in the sense of a work that has come to itself. However, in addition to the questioning of a thoroughly questionable two-stage model of the value form, which Oetzel also historicized, it would be necessary to ask at this point above all the question of whether Oetzel is the synthesis achievement of the power of imagination (qua schematism), which, according to the concepts of understanding, should a priori be applied to all forms of sensuality, does not take too seriously, and thus, as Deleuze says, follows a theological principle which, in the sense of recognition, was Kant's, but which, after all, cannot easily be transferred to Marx's problems. Also the Marxian objective thought form (not form of existence), as Žižek again argues against Karatani, is not identical with Kant's status of the transcendental subject, because that would include, among other things, the equation of the transcendental subject with the notions of capital (including the ideological forms of knowledge), which, incidentally, is quite related to the equation of Hegel's automatic subject with the notion of capital, and this would be thought far too simply. To understand neither as phenomenal nor noumenal, the transcendental subject for Žižek proves to be purely empty and formal. (Žižek 2006: 24f.) The a priori of capital, on the other hand, at least in its discursive representation, should be written as if it could certainly update itself in everything empirical and implant itself entirely in the sensual, for it is always and everywhere needed where something is only lacking, and this absurdly still presents itself as if capital were the work or the potential energy itself, which expresses itself in each individual phenomenon.

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